

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 121428Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3892
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 DAMASCUS 4370

EXDIS

1. FOLLOWING MESSAGE PASSED TO CODEL FOR COMMENT BUT HAS
NOT YET BEEN CLEARED:

2. SUMMARY: ASSAD CALLED FOR INCREASED CONTACT BETWEEN
SYRIAN AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING.
HE HOPED IT WAS CLEAR THAT SYRIA WAS WORKING FOR PEACE WHILE
ISRAEL QUIBBLED OVER TERMS SUCH AS NATURE OF PEACE. HE RE-
JECTED IDEA THAT PEACE INCLUDES ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS, COMMERCE OR OTHER SIMILAR DEMANDS ISRAEL WAS TRYING
TO DICTATE. ASSAD CLAIMED THAT WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS TO
DISCUSS ESSENCE OF PROBLEM, I.E., COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL
AND RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. IN THIS CONNECTION
U.S. MUST ASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. ALTHOUGH U.S. CANNOT
IMPOSE PEACE, IT MUST WORK DILIGENTLY NOT TO CREATE CONDITIONS
FOR WAR BY ENCOURAGING ISRAELIS THROUGH MILITARY SUPPLY.
HE PREDICTED THAT EVEN IF BEGIN GOES TO GENEVA, HE WILL
DEMAND ARAB CAPITULATION RATHER THAN SEEK PEACE. PLO
REPRESENTATION WOULD NOT BE PROBLEM IF ISRAEL RECOGNIZED
RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS; INVITATION COULD BE SENT TO PLO
AND UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION COULD BE FORMED. IN ANSWER
TO QUESTION RE SYRIAN JEWS, ASSAD SAID THEY HAD SAME RIGHTS
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AS ANY SYRIAN CITIZEN. IF AMERICAN COMES TO SYRIA AND
MARRIES JEWISH GIRL, THEY CAN LEAVE TOGETHER. IN ANY EVENT,
AUTHORITIES ARE INTERESTED IN SOLVING PROBLEMS OF ALL CITIZENS.
IN CONCLUSION, ASSAD SAID ISRAEL MUST STOP FISHING IN
TROUBLED WATERS OF SOUTH LEBANON AND ADDED HE WOULD
WELCOME US ASSISTANCE FOR EQUIPING LEBANESE ARMY. END SUMMARY.

3. PRESIDENT ASSAD MET WITH CONGRESSMEN HAMILTON, OBEY, ROSENTHAL, AND MIKVA AND AMBASSADOR JULY 10 FOR TWO HOURS. HAMILTON EXPRESSED APPRECIATION IN CONGRESS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN US-SYRIAN RELATIONS OVER PAST TWO YEARS AND EXPLAINED THAT PRINCIPLE PURPOSE OF THIS VISIT WAS TO TRY TO EXPLORE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE SAID THAT HIS DELEGATION HAD JUST COME FROM ISRAEL WHERE IT HAD MET WITH PRIMIN BEGIN, ARAB MAYORS ON WEST BANK AND MAYOR OF GAZA. HE ADDED THAT DELEGATION HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BY ITS TALKS WITH BEGIN AND PARTICULARLY BY STRONG EMPHASIS HE PLACED ON GOING TO GENEVA CONFERENCE WITHOUT ANY PRECONDITIONS WHATEVER.

4. PRESIDENT ASSAD EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR MISSION THE DELEGATION WAS CARRYING OUT IN PROBING PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST, BECAUSE ANY CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING PEACE IN REGION IS "NOBLE WORK." THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IN CONTEXT OF AMERICAN OPINION CONCERNING PROBLEMS OF MIDDLE EAST, THE MORE THAT IS DONE ON SPOT TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH FACTS, THE MORE EFFECTIVE WILL BE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACE. ACHIEVING PEACE IN REGION IS IN INTEREST OF EVERYONE. PREVIOUSLY WHEN RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND AMERICA WERE NOT GOOD, ASSAD HAD MET WITH NON-OFFICIAL AMERICANS WHO TOLD HIM THAT US OFFICIALS AND CITIZENS WERE NOT AWARE OF THE EFFECTS OF THE PREVAILING SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE
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EAST. PRESIDENT WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR THIS AND DID NOT BELIEVE IT, BUT AFTER IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES IN 1973 SYRIA CAME TO BELIEVE FACT THAT MANY AMERICAN CITIZENS AND EVEN OFFICIALS WERE UNAWARE OF SITUATION. THUS THERE SHOULD BE MORE CONTACT BETWEEN AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND PEOPLE IN REGION FOR THIS WILL LEAD TO A BETTER AND MORE PRECISE UNDERSTANDING AND WILL BE BENEFICIAL TO THE CAUSE OF A JUST PEACE IN THE AREA. AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND CITIZENS HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING NOW BUT MORE EFFORT WILL BRING EVEN MORE CLARITY.

5. THE PRESIDENT HOPED THE SYRIAN POINT OF VIEW WAS CLEAR TO DELEGATION PARTICULARLY AFTER ITS MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM (SEPTTEL). SYRIA WANTS PEACE AND IS STRUGGLING FOR IT. ON FIRST DAY OF OCTOBER WAR, ASSAD GAVE A SPEECH IN WHICH HE ASKED ISRAEL FOR SAKE OF PEACE TO GIVE UP THE TERRITORIES IT HAD TAKEN BY FORCE AND TO IMPLEMENT RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS. HE ALSO ASKED US TO WORK TOWARD IMPLEMENTING THESE RESOLUTIONS, MANY OF WHICH US HAD VOTED FOR. PRESIDENT ASSAD CONCLUDED THAT NO ONE IN THE WORLD COULD SAY THAT THIS DEMAND BY ARABS CONSTITUTED A THREAT TO ANYONE ELSE.

6. HAMILTON RECALLED MEETING WITH KHADDAM AND ASKED WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAD IN MIND WHEN HE USED PHRASE "END OF BELLIGERENCY." ASSAD REPLIED THAT ISRAELIS MUST BE SMARTEST PEOPLE IN WORLD WHEN IT COMES TO INVENTING NEW TERMS. IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT THE SCORES OF TERMS WHICH ISRAELIS HAD INTRODUCED INTO INTERNATIONAL DEBATE DID NOT EXIST BEFORE. ISRAELIS TRY TO CONVINCE PEOPLE OF VALIDITY OF THESE UNREAL TERMS SUCH AS "SECURE BORDERS," "REAL PEACE," "CONCRETE PEACE" AND "GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE ISRAELIS WILL CREATE IN FUTURE." THEY WERE ABLE TO MISLEAD A GREAT PART OF WORLD PUBLIC OPINION. SYRIA DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT IS MEANT BY REAL OR UNREAL PEACE. DOES UNREAL PEACE MEAN THAT PEACE PREVAILS OR NOT? SYRIA UNDERSTANDS TWO
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STATES: WAR AND PEACE. WHEN SYRIA SAYS THAT STATE OF WAR IS OVER, IT AUTOMATICALLY MEANS THAT STATE OF PEACE PREVAILS.

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7. ASSAD ADDED THAT PEACE IS DEFINED AS ENDING STATE OF WAR. AND IN ORDER TO MOVE TO A STATE OF PEACE MEASURES MUST BE TAKEN TO END STATE OF BELLIGERENCY. OTHER DEMANDS

MADE BY ISRAEL, WHICH THEY DICTATE AS REQUIREMENTS OF PEACE, ARE THINGS WHEN COME AT A STAGE WHEN AMICABLE RELATIONS AND COOPERATION AND IMPROVED CONTACT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. FOR EXAMPLE, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYRIA AND US HAD NOT BEEN BELLIGERENT EVEN THOUGH FOR MANY YEARS THERE WERE NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. EVEN SO, ISRAEL SAYS THAT SUCH RELATIONS ARE A REQUIREMENT OF PEACE. US AND CUBA WERE NOT IN STATE OF WAR BUT THERE WERE STILL NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. FOR MANY YEARS AFTER WWI THE US AND SOVIET UNION DID NOT RECOGNIZE ONE ANOTHER BUT THEY WERE NOT AT WAR. WHEN ISRAEL PUTS FORTH SUCH DEMANDS IT UNDERESTIMATES INTELLIGENCE OF PEOPLE NOT ONLY IN THE ARAB WORLD BUT ALL OVER. THERE ARE COUNTRIES IN WORLD WHERE NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS EXIST EVEN THOUGH THE COUNTRIES ARE AT PEACE, AND COUNTRIES WHERE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS EXIST AND YET THERE IS NO COMMERCE BETWEEN THEM, AND THEN THERE IS EXAMPLE OF LEBANON AND SYRIA WHERE FROM THE BEGINNING THERE HAVE NEVER BEEN ANY FORMAL RELATIONS AND YET NO TWO COUNTRIES COULD

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BE ANY CLOSER.

8. HAMILTON SAID THE IDEA BEHIND RESOLUTION 242 WAS THAT ISRAEL WOULD WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN EXCHANGE FOR PEACE AND NORMAL RELATIONS. IF ISRAEL WERE TO WITHDRAW, WHAT WOULD SYRIA BE PREPARED TO DO IN TERMS OF TRADE AND COMMERCE, CEASING ANTI-ISRAELI PROPAGANDA, OR OTHER SPECIFIC STEPS? ASSAD REPLIED THAT COMMERCE IS NOT A ONE PARTY PROCESS. IT REQUIRES MORE THAN ONE AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF SYRIAN CITIZENS ARE PREPARED TO ENGAGE IN TRADE WITH ISRAEL. GOVERNMENT CANNOT IMPOSE SUCH TRADE ON THEM. THIS MATTER CONCERNS THE INTERNAL INTEREST OF A COUNTRY. IF ONE COUNTRY IS NOT INTERESTED IN HAVING COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS OR TRADE WITH ANOTHER THEN THERE WILL BE NO TRADE. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR ONE COUNTRY TO IMPOSE ITS DESIRE FOR TRADE ON ANOTHER. AFTER ALL, THERE ARE ARAB COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT TRADE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

9. HAMILTON OBSERVED THAT IF WE ARE TO GET PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST WE MUST MOVE AWAY FROM THE RHETORIC WHICH COMES FROM BOTH ARAB AND ISRAELI SIDES. ISRAELI MUST BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON TERRITORIES. THE ARAB WORLD FOR ITS PART MUST BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON WHAT IT MEANS BY END OF BELLIGERENCY. APPARENTLY, IT IS FELT IN MANY PARTS OF ARAB WORLD THAT US WILL IMPOSE A SOLUTION. THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN. US CANNOT DO THIS; ALL IT CAN DO IS TRY TO FACILITATE A SOLUTION. UNLESS PARTIES ARE MORE FORTHCOMING THAN THEY HAVE BEEN AT THIS POINT, PROSPECTS FOR PEACE ARE NOT ENCOURAGING. THE QUESTION IS HOW TO GET PARTIES TO PUT ASIDE RHETORIC

AND BEGIN TO DEAL WITH SPECIFICS OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT.

10. ASSAD SAID HE THOUGHT IS WAS A WASTE OF TIME TO DISCUSS
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MARGINAL MATTERS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS TO TALK ABOUT SUBSTANCE OF PROBLEM AND THIS IS MATTER OF CONCRETE FACTS. AMONG THESE FACTS IS ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORY. OCCUPATION OF TERRITORY IS NOT PERMITTED UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW OR UNDER UN RESOLUTIONS. AND WHEN ISRAEL CONTINUES ITS OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORY IT IS IMPOSING A PRECONDITION ON ARABS. INTERNATIONAL LAW REQUIRES OCCUPIER TO GIVE UP LAND IT OCCUPIES. LAW DOES NOT IMPOSE CONDITIONS SUCH AS THAT ONE PARTY TRADE WITH OTHER. IF SYRIA WERE TO OCCUPY LAND OF ANOTHER, IT WOULD USURP RIGHTS OF THAT COUNTRY, BUT WHEN SYRIA DOES NOT RECOGNIZE ANOTHER STATE OR TRADE WITH IT, NO RIGHTS HAVE BEEN USURPED. AS FOR ARABS, THEY DID NOT AGREE TO ENDING STATE OF BELLIGERENCY FOR MANY YEARS. NOW THEY DO AGREE AND THIS MEANS THEY AGREE TO PEACE. PRESIDENT ASSAD ADDED THAT PERSONALLY, WHEN HE AGREED TO END STATE OF BELLIGERENCY, HE DID NOT CONSIDER IT AS A PRICE THAT HAD TO BE PAID FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 BUT HE DID SO FOR SAKE OF PEACE WHICH IS IMPORTANT FOR REGION AND WORLD. BUT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967 SHOULD TAKE PLACE WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS AGREEMENT TO END STATE OF WAR. OTHERWISE, NEW INTERNATIONAL LAW IS CREATED IN THE WORLD WHICH WOULD HAVE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES. COUNTRY COULD OCCUPY PART OF ANOTHER AND THEN IMPOSE CONDITIONS. ASSAD REITERATED HIS FEELING THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS SUBSTANCE OF UNCONDITIONAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE RESTORATION OF USURPED RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS.

11. AS FOR THOUGHT THAT US WOULD NOT OR COULD NOT IMPOSE A SOLUTION, IT NEVER ENTERED PRESIDENT ASSAD'S MIND. WHAT IS IMPORTANT, HE SAID, WAS FOR US TO EXERCISE ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AS A SUPERPOWER AND AS A PERMANENT MEMBER OF UNSC WHICH HAS SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PEACE IN WORLD AND IN REGION. IF US CARRIES OUT THESE RESPONSIBILITIES, IT WILL HAVE A GREAT EFFECT IN PROCESS OF CREATING PEACE
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IN REGION. IN THIS CONGEXT, SYRIA BELIEVES THAT WHILE US IS UNABLE TO IMPOSE PEACE, IT MUST WORK DILIGENTLY TO AVOID IMPOSING WAR ON REGION. THIS MAY SOUND DIFFICULT TO UNDER-

STAND, BUT SYRIA BELIVES THAT US IS THE MATERIAL FORCE WHICH ENABLES ISRAEL TO CONTINUE ITS OCCUPATION OF TERRITORY, ITS DISPLACEMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND ITS DEFIANCE OF UN RESOLUTIONS INCLUDING THOSE VOTED FOR BY US. IT IS MATTER OF FACT THAT IF IT WERE NOT FOR MODERN WEAPONS WHICH US SUPPLIES ISRAEL AND GREAT AMOUNT OF US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, ISRAEL WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COMMIT AGGRESSION AND WOULD BE UNABLE TO CONTINUE TO DO SO. DOES THIS REASONING NOT INDICATE THAT

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EXDIS

US IS ABLE TO IMPOSE A FORM OF AGGRESSION ON REGION AND IS THIS COMPATIBLE WITH ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AS A SUPERPOWER? DOES THIS NOT MEAN THAT US IS ABLE TO IMPOSE A STATE OF WAR EVEN THOUGH IT CANNOT IMPOSE A STATE OF PEACE? SYRIA CANNOT UNDERSTAND US SUPPORT WHICH TIES ITS INTERESTS TO THOSE OF A SMALL COUNTRY CONTINUING ITS AGGRESSION. IT IS SELF-EVIDENT TO SYRIA THAT A SUPERPOWER MUST BE COMMITTED TO CAUSE OF JUSTICE IN WORLD, BUT IT APPEARS TO SYRIA AS IF THERE EXISTS A STRONG SUPERPOWER COMMITTING ITSELF TO A SMALL COUNTRY WHICH INSISTS ON AGGRESSION. SYRIA CONSIDERS THIS A GRAVE ERROR, PRICE FOR WHICH WILL BE PAID, SOONER OR LATER, NOT ONLY BY SYRIA BUT ALSO BY US.

12. ROSENTHAL ASKED IF IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE ARABS AND ISRAELIS TO MEET TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES DIRECTLY. ASSAD REPLIED THAT GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD PROVIDE A SUITABLE

CLIMATE FOR SUCH A DISCUSSION. ASSAD SUGGESTED THAT DURING THE DELEGATION'S VISIT TO ISRAEL THEY FOUND AN ATMOSPHERE NOT CONDUCTIVE TO PEACE. FOR EXAMPLE, PRIMIN BEGIN HAD PUBLICLY DESCRIBED THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AS LIBERATED. ASSAD
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SAID HE DOUBTED BEGIN WOULD HAVE SAID ANYTHING ELSE IN PRIVATE SINCE HE BELIEVES IN CONCEPT OF GREATER ISRAEL. EVEN IF BEGIN GOES TO GENEVA, IT WILL ONLY BE TO GET AN ARAB SIGNATURE ON A DOCUMENT WHICH SAYS THAT THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ARE LIBERATED.

13. HAMILTON REMARKED THAT BEGIN HAD STRESSED ENTERING NGGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRE-CONITIONS OR PRE-CONCEPTIONS. HAMILTON NOTED THAT ISRAEL SAYS IT WILL NOT GO TO GENEVA IF PLO IS REPRESENTED AND ASKED IF IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR INDIVIDUAL PLO REPRESENTATIVES TO BE INCLUDED IN AN ARAB OR JORDANIAN DELEGATION AT GENEVA. ASSAD SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO DISCUSS THIS QUESTION SINCE IT REALLY WAS ONE OF SUBSTANCE RATHER THAN PROCEDURE. THE PROBLEM IS THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT RECOGNIZE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS. IF ISRAEL RECOGNIZED RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS, AND FOR PROCEDURAL REASONS REPRESENTATION OF THESE RIGHTS WAS TRANSFERRED TO A JORDANIAN OR EGYPTIAN DELEGATION, THIS WOULD BE ONE THING. BUT IF, AS SYRIA BELIEVES TO BE THE CASE, ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT TO RECOGNIZE THESE RIGHTS IT IS QUITE ANOTHER MATTER. AT ANY RATE IF IT WERE JUST A PROCEDURAL MATTER, PERHAPS AN INVITATION COULD BE SENT TO PLO AND THEN A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF SYRIA, EGYPT, JORDAN, AND THE PLO COULD BE FORMED. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD NOT DISCUSSED THIS IDEA WITH ANYONE BUT ONCE HE FOUND OUT THAT A SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE WAS NOT INVOLVED, IDEA COULD BE DISCUSSED AND FORMALIZED. FOR THAT MATTER, AT ALL TIMES IN PAST SYRIA HAD ADVOCATED A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION FOR GENEVA.

14. MIKVA SAID THAT THE DELEGATION HAD MET THAT MORNING WITH LEADERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WHOSE LEADER TOUTAH HAD EXPRESSED GRATITUDE OF JEWISH COMMUNITY FOR THE
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POLICIES ASSAD WAS CARRYING OUT AND SAID HE WOULD LIKE TOMEET WITH PRESIDENT. MIKVA THEN RAISED QUESTION OF UNMARRIED SYRIAN JEWISH GIRLS WHO CAN'T FIND HUSBANDS IN SYRIA AND WHOM THE COMMUNITY HOPES TO HELP

FIND JEWISH MEN IN AMERICA. ASSAD POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD PREVIOUSLY MET WITH TOUTAH AND REST OF COUNCIL. THERE WERE THEN SEVERAL LEGAL PROBLEMS WHICH NEEDED SOLVING AND THESE WERE SOLVED EVEN TO THE POINT OF GIVING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT IN REGARD TO REST OF CITIZENS. ASSAD RECALLED TIME TWO OR THREE JEWISH GIRLS WERE SENT TO PRISON FOR CRIMINAL ACTS ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHER SYRIANS GUILTY OF SAME CRIME. ASSAD PARDONED THREE GIRLS AT BEHEST OF JEWISH COMMUNITY AND BECAUSE THEY WERE WOMEN WHILE HE DID NOT PARDON OTHER SYRIAN OFFENDERS. SYRIA DOES NOT DEAL WITH ITS CITIZENS ON BASIS OF RELIGION, RATHER IT ENCOURAGES EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF FAITH, TO PRACTICE RITES OF HIS OWN RELIGION. SYRIA HAS MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS OF VARIOUS SECTS AND HAS NO RELIGIOUS PROBLEM. SYRIAN CONSTITUTION DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ANYONE FOR HIS RELIGION. SYRIA'S STAND IN LEBANON IS PROOF THAT IT HAS NO RELIGIOUS PROJUDICE. BUT SYRIA CONDEMNS CITIZENS WHO ARE LOYAL TO OTHER COUNTRIES. HE OBSERVED WRONGLY, "IMAGINE IF SYRIA'S CHRISTIANS WERE LOYAL TO A CERTAIN CHRISTIAN COUNTRY AND ITS MOSLEMS LOYAL TO ANOTHER MUSLIM COUNTRY. SYRIA WOULD SOON BE WITHOUT CITIZENS."

15. WHEN PRESIDENT MET MEMBERS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL HE TALKED TO THEM ABOUT QUESTION OF LOYALTY. ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL WAS A PAINFUL MATTER SINCE ISRAEL CLAIMS IT REPRESENTS ALL JEWS. AND THERE HAD BEEN SYMPATHY DEMONSTRATED FOR ISRAEL BY SOME ARAB JEWS AND THIS HAD AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON TREATMENT OF ARAB JEWS. MEMBERS OF COUNCIL TOLD ASSAD THEY BELIEVED CREATION OF ISRAEL HAD BEEN A DISASTER FOR THEM AND FOR MANY OTHER JEWS IN WORLD. ONE MEMBER SAID HE AND HIS FOREFATHERS HAD BEEN BORN IN SYRIA AND HE WOULD NOT TRADE THE WHOLE OF ISRAEL
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FOR HIS STORE IN DAMASCUS. THE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT IS WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST COMMERCIAL STORES IN DAMASCUS. ASSAD INDICATED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME PROBLEMS REGARDING JEWS IN DAMASCUS INASMUCH AS CREATION OF ISRAEL HAD HAD AN ADVERSE EFFECT, BUT IMPORTANT PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN SOLVED. AT PRESENT TIME IT IS COMPULSORY THAT THERE BE NO DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN JEWS AND REST OF SYRIAN CITIZENS. AS FOR TRAVEL OUTSIDE SYRIA, SAME RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO ALL. IF A MOSLEM ASKED TO GO TO ISRAEL HE WOULD BE REFUSED. ISRAEL IS AN ENEMY. BUT FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, WORSHIP, OWNERSHIP, TRADE AND COMMERCE ARE ALL GUARANTEED TO EVERYONE. ANY FREEDOMS GRANTED TO REST OF CITIZENS ARE ALSO GRANTED TO JEWS.

16. ASSAD SAID THAT WITH REGARD TO MARRIAGE, JEWS HAVE SAME FREEDOM AS REST OF CITIZENS. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, 200

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MOSLEM GIRLS ASKED TO LEAVE COUNTRY TO GET MARRIED IN US, SYRIA WOULD REFUSE SINCE IT WOULD CAUSE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. BUT IF AN AMERICAN COMES TO SYRIA AND MARRIES A MOSLEM GIRL HERE ACCORDING TO ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES, THEN OF COURSE HE WILL BE ALLOWED TO TAKE HIS WIFE WITH HIM UNLESS THERE ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. INDIVIDUAL CASES SHOULD BE TREATED ON THEIR MERITS FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF AN AMERICAN JEW WANTS TO COME TO SYRIA TO MARRY A JEWISH GIRL, THEIR DEPARTURE WILL BE FACILITATED BY AUTHORITIES. ASSAD MENTIONED THAT LAWS AND REGULATIONS DO NOT PREVENT INTER-MARRIAGE FOR THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF CASES OF MARRIAGE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS. OF COURSE, HE OBSERVED HUMOROUSLY, IF HEWS ARE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH ON MARRIAGE, PROBLEM OF NOT ENOUGH MEN COULD BE SOLVED. FOR EXAMPLE, A MOSLEM CAN MARRY FOUR WIVES. IN SUM, SYRIAN AUTHORITIES FEEL ABOUT JEWS THE WAY THEY FEEL ABOUT REST OF CITIZENS AND NATURALLY SEEK TO SOLVE PROBLEMS OF ALL CITIZENS.

17. IN CONCLUSION, HAMILTON ASKED PRESIDENT ASSAD TO COMMENT ON LEBANON REGARDING SYRIA'S ROLE AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE,
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PARTICULARLY SINCE CONGRESS WILL FACE A REQUEST FOR ARMS FOR LEBANON. ASSAD SAID THAT SYRIA'S ROLE AND TASK IS TO RESTORE SECURITY AND NORMAL LIFE IN LEBANON. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD ONLY THE DAY PREVIOUS DISCUSSED WITH PALESTINIAN LEADERS ISSUES WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN CAIRO AGREEMENT. IN GENERAL, SITUATION IN LEBANON IS GOOD. THERE IS NO FIGHTING AND SECURITY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED EXCEPT IN A NARROW STRIP IN SOUTH LEBANON NEAR ISRAELI BORDER. AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT ISRAEL IS ENCOURAGING FIGHTING THERE. NEVERTHELESS, SYRIA IS TRYING TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM. ASSAD SAID HE BELIEVED THE NEXT STEP AFTER IMPLEMENTING CAIRO AGREEMENT MUST BE TO COLLECT LIGHT ARMS IN ADDITION TO HEAVY ARMS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN COLLECTED. SECURITY CANNOT BE CONCRETELY ESTABLISHED WITH ARMS IN HANDS OF EVERY CITIZEN. AT SAME TIME, ISRAEL MUST CEASE ITS ENCOURAGEMENT OF FIGHTING. SYRIA BELIEVES IT WILL BE BENEFICIAL IF US GIVES MILITARY AID TO EQUIP LEBANESE ARMY FOR IT IS UNBELIEVABLE THAT ANY STATE SHOULD BE WITHOUT AN ARMY. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE THE FORCE NECESSARY TO ENSURE SECURITY.

18. HAMILTON THANKED PRESIDENT ASSAD FOR HIS TIME AND NOTED PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SAID ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS HOW USEFUL MEETING BETWEEN THEM HAD BEEN AND HAD EXPRESSED HIS HIGH REGARD FOR ASSAD AS AN ARAB LEADER. ASSAD ASKED THE DELEGATION TO TRANSMIT HIS WARM REGARDS TO CARTER.
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